



# Colorado Legislative Council Staff

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## MEMORANDUM

August 7, 2015

**TO:** Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the Blind Interim Study Committee

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**SUBJECT:** Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Funding

### Summary

This memorandum provides an overview of vocational rehabilitation programs in Colorado, including services for the blind. It also discusses the current appropriations and funding sources for these programs.

### Overview

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) in the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) provides a range of services to help persons with disabilities prepare for, find, and maintain employment. Services are provided through the state's Vocational Rehabilitation Program, as well as through several other related programs in the DVR.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program serves persons with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities whose impairments constitute a substantial impediment to employment. Services are provided at 43 offices throughout the state. To participate, an individual must be evaluated by a rehabilitation counselor to determine that he or she requires vocational rehabilitation services in order to meet his or her individual employment goals.

**Program transfer.** Beginning July 1, 2016, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, along with several related programs in the DVR, will be transferred to the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE). Pursuant to Senate Bill 15-239, the CDLE and CDHS must prepare a transition plan by December 1, 2015, concerning the transfer of vocational rehabilitation programs.

### Vocational Rehabilitation Programs and Funding

For FY 2015-16, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is appropriated \$55.0 million and 231.2 FTE. Of this amount, \$34.8 million and 223.7 FTE are for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Federal funds and General Fund are the primary funding sources for programs in the

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, along with cash funds and transfers of education funding. The main source of federal funding for vocational rehabilitation is through a formula grant to states under Section 110 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973.<sup>1</sup> Federal grant funding is also available for training of vocational rehabilitation personnel such as counselors, trainers, and interpreters and for other state projects.

Table 1 below highlights the programs and funding in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and indicates which programs will be transferred to the Department of Labor and Employment and which will remain in the Department of Human Services. Descriptions of the programs are also included below.

**Table 1**  
**Funding for Programs in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, FY 2015-16**

| Program                                   | General Fund       | Cash Funds         | Reappropriated Funds | Federal Funds       | Total Funds         |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Programs Being Transferred to CDLE</b> |                    |                    |                      |                     |                     |
| Vocational Rehabilitation Program         | \$4,376,828        | \$0                | \$3,028,441          | \$27,371,256        | \$34,776,525        |
| School to Work Alliance                   | 0                  | 34,647             | 1,910,872            | 7,188,372           | 9,133,891           |
| Business Enterprise Program               | 0                  | 752,176            | 0                    | 1,197,946           | 1,950,122           |
| <b>Subtotal</b>                           | <b>\$4,376,828</b> | <b>\$786,823</b>   | <b>\$4,939,313</b>   | <b>\$35,757,574</b> | <b>\$45,860,538</b> |
| <b>Programs Remaining in DHS</b>          |                    |                    |                      |                     |                     |
| Independent Living Centers                | 2,831,945          | 29,621             | 0                    | 359,500             | 3,221,066           |
| Older Blind Grants                        | 0                  | 45,000             | 0                    | 694,900             | 739,900             |
| Brain Injury Program                      | 0                  | 3,304,933          | 0                    | 0                   | 3,304,933           |
| Federal Social Security Reimbursements    | 0                  | 0                  | 0                    | 1,885,600           | 1,885,600           |
| <b>Subtotal</b>                           | <b>\$2,831,945</b> | <b>\$3,379,554</b> | <b>\$0</b>           | <b>\$2,940,000</b>  | <b>\$9,151,499</b>  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                              | <b>\$7,208,773</b> | <b>\$4,166,377</b> | <b>\$4,939,313</b>   | <b>\$38,697,574</b> | <b>\$55,012,037</b> |

Source: Senate Bill 15-234 (FY 2015-16 Long Bill).

**School to Work Alliance.** The School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) provides year-round services to assist young people with disabilities to become employed and self-sufficient. Services include counseling and guidance, job development, job placement, on-the-job training, and job site support. SWAP operates through cooperative agreements between the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and local school districts.

**Business Enterprise Program.** The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) places qualified legally blind business persons as managers of food service operations, primarily in state-owned buildings and facilities. The BEP operates under the federal Randolph-Sheppard Act. A prior memorandum by Legislative Council Staff with additional detail on the BEP and the state and federal law concerning blind vendor programs is provided as Attachment A.

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<sup>1</sup>See 29 U.S.C. §730. The funding formula to states is based on population weighted by per capita income. This federal funding requires a 21.3 percent non-federal match and is subject to a state maintenance-of-effort requirement.

***Independent living centers.*** The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation contracts with ten independent living centers statewide to provide services, support, and advocacy to help persons with disabilities live independently. These centers, which are private, nonprofit organizations, provide a range of services, including information and referrals, individual and systems advocacy, independent living skills training, and cross-disability peer counseling.

***Brain Injury Program*** The Brain Injury Program is funded through the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Trust Fund. The fund receives surcharges on violations for speeding, driving under the influence, driving while ability impaired, and the children's helmet law. The Brain Injury Program provides case management, services, and supports to eligible adults and youths with brain injuries.

## **Services for the Blind**

In addition to the Business Enterprise Program described above, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program also includes programs specifically for person who are blind or have visual impairments. These programs are discussed below.

The ***Personal Adjustment Training (PAT) Program*** offers specialized training to help persons who have vision loss to become independent at home, in the community, and in employment. The program offers center-based and field-based training in the areas of adaptive communications, assistive technology, orientation and mobility, daily living skills, and adapting to low vision.

The ***Older Individuals who are Blind Program*** serves persons age 55 and older who are blind or visually impaired. Individuals served in this program typically have become blind or visually impaired later in life. The program provides services to help older adults adapt to vision loss and live independently.